

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 220918Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9344
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4865

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR LE
SUBJ: BIO DATA ON REBEL OFFICERS IN SOUTH LEBANON

1. AT DINNER ON AUGUST 20 CAPT. NICOLAS MAJDALANY, HEAD OF THE FLYING SCHOOL AT RIYAQ AIR BASE, TOLD EMBOFFS THAT HE KNEW WELL THREE REBEL OFFICERS IN SOUTH LEBANON: GEORGES ZAATER, SAMI SHIDIAC, AND SA'D HADDAD. MAJDALANY REMARKED THAT ZAATER HAD BEEN ONE OF HIS FLYING STUDENTS AND THAT ZAATER:

-- WAS A GREEK CATHOLIC FROM ZAHLE, BORN AROUND 1952 OR 1953;

-- HAD GRADUATED FROM THE BASIC FLYING COURSE AT RIYAQ IN 1974 OR 1975 AND HAD TAKEN ADVANCED FLYING INSTRUCTION IN FRANCE IN 1976;

-- WAS NOT A MEMBER OF ANY POLITICAL PARTY AND HAD LEFT ZAHLE FOR SOUTH LEBANON AROUND THE END OF 1976.

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2. MAJDALANY COMMENTED THAT DURING THE 1975-76 WAR ZAATER HAD LED COURAGEOUS BUT FOOLHARDY ATTACKS AGAINST SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS IN THE ZAHLE AREA. ZAATER WAS AN EXCELLENT BUT RECKLESS PILOT. MAJDALANY HAD TOLD ZAATER, "YOU FLY WELL BUT YOU ARE GOING TO KILL YOURSELF ONE OF THESE DAYS." MAJDALANY BELIEVED ZAATER HAD GONE SOUTH MORE BECAUSE OF HIS THIRST FOR ADVENTURE THAN FOR

ANY POLITICAL REASONS.

3. MAJDALANY ALSO NOTED THAT SAMI SHIDIAK IS CLOSE TO
THE CHAMOUN FAMILY AND IS RELATED TO THEM BY MARRIAGE.
MAJDALANY SAID SHIDIAK WAS MUCH MORE INTELLIGENT THAN
HADDAD.
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